14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

101 White and the Blue Nile. The northern and southern boundaries of the tribe are about 10° northern latitude (200 miles south of Khartoum) and the north-eastern shores of Lake Victoria respectively.

144 Most nearly related to the Nuer are the Dinka and
197 Shilluk. The latter have numerous sub-sections, such as the Annak in the Sobat river system, the Jur south-west of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Gang or Acholi north-east of Lake Albert, and the Jaluo (Nilotic Kavirondo, as opposed to the Bantu-speaking Kavirondo) in Uganda and Kenya Colony. Nuer, Dinka, and Shilluk show a distinct linguistic affinity, the Nuer and Dinka languages being closely related. The second main group of Nilotic tribes is represented in the Sudan by the Bari, Latuko, and Dongotono. These, on the other hand, show ethnic linguistic relations to the Masai, Nandi, and kindred tribes.

It is natural that people scattered over so large a territory should differ in appearance and culture, yet with all this they show unmistakable common features in language as well as in their ethnic characteristics. It is worth noting that the Nubian tribes living on the shores of the Nile south of Aswan speak a language related to the Nilotic tongues.

144 One may assume that the Nilotic people are the result of a symbiosis and miscegenation between an autochthonous negro population and immigrating eastern Hamitic tribes. The Hamitic element, in physical appearance, culture, and language, is stronger in the Bari-Latuko-Dongotono group; they are therefore called Niloto-Hamitic, as opposed to the southern (Dinka-Nuer-Shilluk) Niloto-Sudanic group.

141 Generally speaking, the Nilotic tribes are tall, rather lean, narrow in the shoulders, their arms and their legs,

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

with thin calves, are long, their hands and feet small. 141
The skin is dark. Men with well-shaped features, thin [142]
lips, and noses with high bridges and narrow nostrils are
not unfrequently met.

Most of the men are fierce, proud, and even haughty in 105
aspect. The Nuer are essentially pastoral; some kind of
farming is done, fishing and hunting are also common,
but the only occupation worthy of a man is to look after
his cattle. The attachment of a man to his cows and of a
boy to the bull with which his father presents him may
almost be called religious. The one real sport for men is
fighting, or cattle raiding, which is practically the same
thing. These predatory expeditions are carried on
wherever opportunity offers and are a cause of constant
friction among the tribes. In their folk-lore tales a
favourite subject is the story of cattle fights.

The main groups of the Nuer and the districts in which 162
they live are:[1] 101

Gaajak, Garjak, Jekiang (Nasser District) .	200,000
Lau (Abwong District)	100,000
Gawaar (Panjak District)	30,000
Lak and Thiang (Zeraf Island, Panjak District)	40,000
Western Nuer (Yirol District) . . .	60,000

One group, the Atwot, have partly adopted Dinka as 197
their language.

The Nuer homes lie close to large river systems, so 36/
that during the rains a large part of their country is a
great swamp, the villages being mostly situated on
ridges along the rivers. The chief vegetation is high
grass, interspersed with single trees or groups of trees.
The country on the upper Sobat, near or in Abyssinia,
is however better wooded and has sparse forests.

[1] Cf. Report of the Relief Language Conference 1930, London 1930.

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

Chapter Ten

THE NUER LANGUAGE

RESULTS OF STUDY

197 THE Nuer language in most points has some similiarity to the other Nilotic languages, having many of the same sounds, but it is a distinct language in itself, and not an outgrowth of the others. Possibly it shows more similarity to the Dinka than to any other of the neighbouring tongues.

212 Various systems have been used in reducing this language to writing, but no one system has been found which seemed to satisfy the different missions and the Government officials who were using a Nilotic language. So in April 1928 the Sudan Government called a conference at Rejaf, where representatives of the missions and governments engaged in work among the Nilotic tribes were present.

The Government had invited Professor Westermann of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures to prepare a system of certain signs to represent the unusual sounds of the Nilotic tongues. Professor Westermann was present and the new system was tested with the various natives at the conference who were present for that purpose from the different tribes.

Thus for the first time a common system was adopted for general use throughout all the Nilotic tribes wherever any effort is being made to reduce any of these languages to writing. This in itself is a big accomplishment, as all missions as well as all Government officials have accepted the system.

872 A standard course of study for the elementary schools was also adopted.

214 The Nuer language so far has not been very largely